

Kyodan

News Letter

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Makinos Leave for India	pg 1
Kyodan General Assembly This Year?	pg 2
Challenging the Status Quo	pg 3
Research/Pioneer Evangelism.....	pg 4

Makinos Leave for India

On Thursday, September 5, Yukiko and Kazuho Makino left for India to resume their missionary careers there. Yukiko is concerned with the needs of Harujan villagers, Kazuho with the problem of hunger and rice culture.

"This time is quite different from when I first went to India in 1965," Kazuho said in the harried days just before the family's departure. "I was a bachelor then. Now there are four of us--my wife, our two daughters and myself--and all our baggage...."

Yukiko too was single when she first went to India in 1967 to work with the Christi Panthi Ashram, following her graduation from the Yokohama Kyoritsu Women's Bible College in Kanagawa. A former casual acquaintance with Kazuho was renewed in India and the two were married there in 1968. Kazuho is returning to the faculty of the Allahabad Agricultural Institute, where he taught from 1965 to 1969. During the past five years he has completed graduate work at the Tokyo University of Education, studied rice culture at the International Rice Research Institute in The Philippines, and planted rice in East Pakistan, and later in Bangladesh, as a member of special planting missions. Earlier this year he conducted an evaluation of aid programs in South Vietnam.

At a farewell held for the couple at Asia Gakuin, where Kazuho has been teaching in the South East Asia Rural Leaders' Training Course (SEAC), he projected the couple's hopes for their three-year term.

In addition to teaching rice culture, he will be experimenting with new varieties of rice, planting times, soil. The extension work he hopes to do may be restricted, he noted, by the fact that motorbike fuel costs have trebled since 1969. He looks forward to establishing links with the more than 20 Indian SEAC alumni. Yukiko wants to resume work in the Ashram's social education among the villages of those who have for centuries suffered as persons identified as "the lowest class" in Indian society. Both Makinos emphasize the necessity of gaining the confidence of the village people in order to share ideas, whether on agriculture, health, literacy, or faith.

Kazuho concluded his "hopes" with a note of realism: There is so much to do and so little time, so many needs, and we have so little knowledge...."

Asked, on another occasion, what his motivation is for going to India, Kazuho without hesitation replied in the words recorded in Matthew 25: "I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink...." When I read these words," he said, "I feel that God has really called me to go to India and work together with Indian Christians to help feed the hungry, provide water to the thirsty.... But it's not enough for me just to go to India and work there," he added. "I must share my work with Japanese Christians."

The Makinos are sent to India as lay missionaries by The United Church of Christ in Japan and Asia Gakuin, in response to an invitation from the Allahabad Agricultural Institute, in a relationship with the Kyodan that began some 15 years ago. Their travel and support are provided by several groups: a Japanese support group of some 100 people, organized in conjunction with the Committee on Ecumenical Ministries of the Kyodan, The Evangelisches Missionswerk in Sudwestdeutschland (Association of Churches and Mission in South Western Germany), the Christian Conference of Asia, The United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.

KYODAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY THIS YEAR

The big question: When can the next Kyodan General Assembly be held? still remains enigmatic after the second meeting of the Assembly Preparation Committee September 2-4.

The meeting was attended by committee members representing all Kyodan districts except Okinawa, and a changing group of non-voting participants, mostly from among the "Problem Posers." Those present wrestled with issues such as the status of the Tokyo District representative, who was delegated by a special Tokyo committee to attend this session as a liaison person, and the feasibility of convening a General Assembly in the continuing impasse of Tokyo and Osaka districts, which offer no prospect of convening their assemblies and electing delegates to Kyodan Sokai (General Assembly) in the foreseeable future.

- - the tensions - -

The deep rift continued to be apparent between the conservative, evangelical wing and the wing pushing for greater involvement in social and political issues. The former are fighting what they believe is a critical battle to guard the church from being taken over by those whom they label "marxists," who they feel have abandoned the basic doctrines of Bible-centred Christianity. The latter are carrying on what they believe is a crucial struggle to shake the church into an awareness of the great issues of social injustice and political and economic imperialism, and to a sense of responsibility to do battle for the oppressed. So strong is the mutual distrust that those at the extreme of each wing believe the church is ruined if the other wing gains the upper hand in church councils.

These feelings emerged openly in the discussions of the Preparation Committee, while Kyodan Moderator Isuke Toda and Vice Moderator Ichiro Ono, chairman and vice chairman respectively of the Preparation Committee, and other members tried to exercise a moderating and reconciling influence.

- - critical factors examined - -

After procedural matters had been dealt with, three statements were read: 1) a blueprint for the 18th General Assembly, drawn up by the Planning Sub-Committee; 2) a critique of the 17th General Assembly and of the plans for

the 18th Assembly issued in the Fukuin-Shugi Domei News (Kyodan Evangelical Association News), and 3) a Statement written and read by Kuniaki Sugawara of Kyogo District. A Statement by Tokai District was circulated.

Of critical importance is the attitude towards a General Assembly held by the executives of Tokyo and Osaka Districts and their intentions concerning convening their own assemblies and electing delegates, and also the stance they will adopt if plans for the General Assembly move ahead without these district assemblies convening.

- - Tokyo's Oishi agrees to try - -

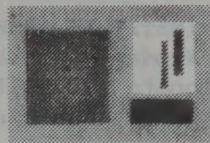
Pressed for a clear expression of his own views and intentions, the Rev. Tsuguo Oishi, a member of the Tokyo District Executive, and the liaison person appointed to the Preparation Committee, made a statement to the effect that he would do what he could to promote discussions and actions leading to the holding of the Tokyo District Assembly.

The upshot of the discussions was that the Kyodan as a whole will refrain from putting pressure on the Tokyo and Osaka Districts, taking a sympathetic attitude of sharing their painful immobilization as a suffering to be borne by the whole church. At the same time, the church would be ready to move onwards to a General Assembly, even in the event these districts fail to convene their assemblies, keeping the lines of communication with them open and trying to reflect their wishes as much as possible in the appointment of delegates to General Assembly in lieu of their elected representatives.

The strong hope was expressed that the General Assembly could be held within the current year, and the Preparation Committee will meet again in mid-October to reassess the situation.

To the very end sentiments remained divided between a cautious optimism that a half-step forward had been taken and a deep pessimism that the deep-lying differences remained as strong and irreconcilable as before. One Kyodan staff secretary suggested that a "ministry of listening" was being carried on, and it seemed clear that the committee members as a whole were trying earnestly to exercise a reconciling ministry between those at the extreme ends of the polarization. (IM)

KOBE STUDENT AND YOUTH CENTER:



Challenging the status quo

The Rokko area between Kobe and Osaka is one of Japan's top five residential areas. Just a few steps up the hill from the Rokko station the nine-story "New Life Mansion" rises, silhouetted against the sky. Below, by a line of parked cars stands a signboard, its hand written announcements a little out of keeping with the quiet side street.

The signboard announces the activities of the Kobe Student and Youth Center, which occupies half of the first floor of the exclusive new apartment building. One might assume that the Center is renting space from the building but, as a matter of fact, the Center built the highrise on property formerly used for a missionary residence by the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.

Director of the Center is Rev. Motonobu Koike, 42, who lives with his wife and two children in an apartment on the fourth floor. Koike is a third generation Christian pastor who, in the midst of the controversy over the Christian Pavilion at Expo '70 began to raise sharp questions about what it means to be "the church." But nothing changed, and Koike decided to leave the pulpit. Having had long associations with the Center, he was asked to be its director when it made a new start in 1973.

The Center is introduced as follows in one of its folders:

Mankind's way of living has always been determined by the spacial factor. The way of life of an individual--from his thought and politics to his family life--is mediated through space. When a person in power wishes to suppress the gathering together of those who oppose him, he does so by destroying their "space" or expelling them from it. A person who wishes to take a free approach to life wants more than anything to have a place where no one can intervene.

Our Center is an attempt to respond concretely to this need. We want to make the Center a garden in which the corporate life of the townspeople, their culture and their religion, may flourish.

The Center program began last year on a tripod of activities: seminars, library and resource services, and a place for meetings. Its first seminar series was on discrimination, its second on food additives.

It was during the seminar on food that the question came up of eggs and their contamination from antibiotics and hormones fed to chickens. The result was the formation of a purchasing cooperative that has grown to the extent that twice a month 13,000 eggs laid by chickens fed natural feed are delivered to 16 places in the Kobe area.

A further by-product of the food seminar was the decision to start an experimental agricultural farm using no chemicals. "These cases illustrate that the seminars are not just a place to absorb knowledge; the point is to move from seminar into action," says Koike.

A question yet to be answered is how the Center will relate its activities to the church. If Koike is not insisting "There is no relationship!" neither is he yet declaring, "This is the form the church must take today."

Koike preaches once a month at the Kobe Kumochi Church. Rev. Yukiya Nakamoto says of his preaching, "As one Christian who has questioned the church and the pastorate now questions himself, he preaches sermons that present a real challenge."

condensed from Kyodan Shimpo June 15, 1974
(full translation available upon request)

RESEARCH INSTITUTE ASSEMBLING HISTORIES

The Kyodan's Research Institute on the Mission of the Church is attempting to locate and collect historical materials on Kyodan churches, including the pre-Kyodan period of their histories.

The four projects being undertaken at the present time are:

- 1) collecting the histories and chronologies of individual congregations;
- 2) locating sources of historical data and identifying historical research groups;
- 3) locating files, records and periodicals from the pre-war and war years (1930-46)
- 4) locating collections--church and private--of former denominations (i.e., Japan Methodist Church, Kumiai Kyokai, etc.) and church organizations; reports of assemblies and general conferences; annual reports, year-books, publications (Methodist Jiho, etc.)

The Research Institute will welcome the loan or gift of, or information about materials of this kind from overseas as well as Japan.

PIONEER EVANGELISM AFFIRMED

"Today when many Kyodan-level meetings have been suspended, the fact that the Conference on Pioneer Evangelism is held again this year shows that the Kyodan, although it has many problems, is still alive." So declared 45 persons who attended the 5th Conference on Pioneer Evangelism September 3-5. In a joint statement issued at the close of the Conference, the following points were made:

1. Pioneer evangelism should be done with the solid support of the area and the district as a base. Until five years ago the conference was convened as the "Conference for Pioneer Evangelists." But the affirmation of this as something that should be carried on not just by pioneer evangelists but through districts and areas, and with district evangelism committee members participating, reveals the place given pioneer evangelism today.
2. Pioneer evangelism is work that all churches should be doing. (see quote above) All Kyodan churches have the responsibility for carrying on pioneer evangelism and we participate in this conference as those who are together undertaking this heavy burden.
3. We should not think that the intent of pioneer evangelism is necessarily to build big churches. Even if an area is very sparsely populated, as long as there are people there, the church's mission is to carry on evangelism among them. Therefore to evaluate pioneer evangelism properly we must avoid applying a "big church" standard.
4. The Kyodan and districts should include pioneer evangelism in the administration of the Kyodan and the districts. For this purpose, representatives of preaching points should be qualified to be assembly members and persons representing small churches elected to the executive committee and to the Kyodan General Assembly.
5. Funds for pioneer evangelism (church building and pastors' livelihood) must be assured. For this there is no way other than for Kyodan churches to contribute concretely for this purpose. But we sense a danger in the widening tendency for individual churches to become "closed corporations" and for the will to carry on pioneer evangelism to become weaker.

However, so that the church may carry on what is its crucial mission, we hope strongly that all churches will take a posture of positive involvement.